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140846Z May 02

2002HANOI01199 - UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED PTQ3987

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ACTION EAP-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	ED-01	FBIE-00	UTED-00	VC-00
	HHS-01	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00
	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01
	PA-00	PER-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00
	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	IIP-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	PRM-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/011W	
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FM AMEMBASSY HANOI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6436  
INFO AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY  
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH  
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE  
USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 HANOI 001199

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/BCLTV

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [VM](#) [DPOL](#)  
SUBJECT: ELECTIONEERING IN THE PROVINCES

REF: A. HANOI 1058 B. HANOI 997

[11.](#) (U) SUMMARY. WELL-ORGANIZED CAMPAIGN RALLIES IN  
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PROVINCES DURING THE WEEK OF MAY 6 OFFERED CANDIDATES AN OPPORTUNITY TO STATE THEIR VIEWS TO VOTERS AND HEAR LOCAL VIEWS AND DESIRES. STABILITY, AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT, LOCAL ECONOMIC PROSPECTS, HEALTH AND EDUCATIONAL ISSUES, AND EVEN AGENT ORANGE ARE AMONG THIS YEAR'S CONCERNS. ALL THOSE UNDER DETENTION, EVEN BEFORE HAVING HAD A COURT HEARING OR SENTENCE, ARE BARRED FROM VOTING, ALONG WITH ALL IN PRISON AND OTHERS WHO HAVE "LOST THEIR POLITICAL RIGHTS." MENTALLY ILL ARE SIMILARLY BARRED. VOTER TURN-OUT IS EXPECTED TO BE CLOSE TO 100 PCT, AIDED BY ACTIVE PERSUASION CAMPAIGNS BY LOCAL OFFICIALS. THE NEW DECLARATIONS OF ASSETS SEEM TO BE PUBLICIZED OR NOT AT THE DISCRETION OF PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL OFFICIALS. END SUMMARY.

[12.](#) (U) POL/C AND FSN VISITED NAM DINH AND THAI BINH PROVINCES, SOUTHEAST OF HANOI, MAY 7-8 TO OBSERVE ONGOING NATIONAL ASSEMBLY CAMPAIGNS AND PREPARATIONS, AND TO MEET WITH PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL ELECTION OFFICIALS. DESPITE THE SUPPORT OF THE MFA, SIMILAR REQUESTS BY POLOFFS FOR PROVINCIAL VISITS WERE DENIED BY PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS IN BAC KAN AND THAI NGUYEN PROVINCES, CLAIMING THEY WERE "TOO BUSY" WITH ELECTION PREPARATIONS.

ON THE ELECTION TRAIL  
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[13.](#) (U) OUR VISIT COINCIDED WITH A WEEK OF STAGED CAMPAIGN RALLIES OFFERING A CHANCE FOR DIRECT CONTACT BETWEEN THE CANDIDATES AND AT LEAST SELECTED VOTERS. NAM DINH ELECTION OFFICIALS SAID THAT THE PROVINCE'S 16 CANDIDATES (THREE OF THEM APPOINTED BY CENTRAL AUTHORITIES) WOULD SPEND MAY 6-10  
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IN THE PROVINCE APPEARING AT LEAST ONCE AT A RALLY IN EACH OF THE FIVE CONSTITUENCIES (EACH OF WHICH COVERS TWO DISTRICTS). A RALLY IN NAM DINH TOWN ON THE MORNING OF OUR VISIT REPORTEDLY ATTRACTED 200 VOTERS; THE QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD ELICITED INQUIRIES ON THE CANDIDATES' PROGRAMS ON PROMOTION OF LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH CARE PROVISION FOR THE ELDERLY, AND EMPLOYMENT GENERATION. EACH OF THE CANDIDATES HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRESENT HIS "PROGRAM OF ACTION," WHICH WILL ALSO BE POSTED AT THE EACH VOTING STATION IN THAT CONSTITUENCY.

[14.](#) (U) ELECTION OFFICIALS AT NAM DINH'S CONSTITUENCY #2 SAID THAT ABOUT 140 PEOPLE HAD ATTENDED A MAY 7 MORNING RALLY THERE. THE PRIMARY FOCI OF QUESTIONING WERE ON PLANS TO INCREASE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND EXPAND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES. THE THREE HOUR SESSION DEVOTED ABOUT HALF OF ITS TIME TO Q&A; LOCAL OFFICIALS CLAIMED THAT VOTERS WERE "VERY INTERESTED" IN THE CAMPAIGN THIS YEAR, MUCH MORE SO

15. (U) THAI BINH CANDIDATES WERE HOLDING A PARALLEL SET OF RALLIES MAY 8-15. ACCORDING TO THE PROVINCIAL PEOPLE'S COMMITTEE VICE CHAIRMAN, THE PRIMARY CONCERN OF VOTERS IS ON "STABILITY," WITHOUT WHICH NEITHER FAMILY NOR NATIONAL LIFE CAN PROGRESS. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WAS A SECONDARY CONCERN, CLEARLY DEPENDENT ON STABILITY, HE STRESSED. OTHER PRIMARY CONCERNS OF THE VOTERS IN THIS YEAR'S ELECTIONS ARE ON POVERTY REDUCTION, HEALTH CARE FOR CHILDREN, COMBATING NARCOTICS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION. THE SECRETARY OF THE PROVINCIAL ELECTION COMMITTEE SEPARATELY HIGHLIGHTED "STABLE POLITICS" AS A MAIN CONCERN AMONG VOTERS, ALONG WITH UNCLASSIFIED

16. (U) OFFICIALS IN BOTH PROVINCES ADMITTED IN RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS THAT MANY, IF NOT MOST, OF THOSE WHO ATTENDED THE CAMPAIGN RALLIES WERE INVITED AS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE VARIOUS MASS ORGANIZATIONS UNDER THE VIETNAM FATHERLAND FRONT (WOMEN, YOUTH, VETERANS, FARMERS, ETC.). OFFICIALS UNIFORMLY STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT ALL RALLIES WERE "OPEN TO THE PUBLIC" AND WERE PUBLICIZED IN THE LOCAL MEDIA AS WELL AS AT THE VARIOUS VOTING STATIONS. THEY CLAIMED THAT ALL AGENCIES WERE "REQUIRED" TO RELEASE ANY VOTERS FROM WORK IN ORDER TO ATTEND THESE MEETINGS, BUT DID NOT EXPLAIN HOW THIS WOULD APPLY TO DAY LABORERS OR PRIVATE SECTOR EMPLOYEES. (NOTE: HANOI ELECTION COMMITTEE OFFICIALS FAILED TO RESPOND EVEN TO OUR REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE LOCATION AND TIMING OF CAMPAIGN RALLIES IN THE CAPITAL, IN PARTICULAR THOSE INVOLVING COMMUNIST PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY NONG DUC MANH -- A CANDIDATE IN CONSTITUENCY #1 -- MUCH LESS OUR REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO OBSERVE AT LEAST ONE SUCH RALLY. END NOTE)

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INFO	LOG-00	NF-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	ED-01	FBIE-00	UTED-00	VC-00
	HHS-01	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00
	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01
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ONE PER EVENING). CANDIDATES ARE ALSO FREE TO GO STUMPING  
ON THEIR OWN, BUT OFFICIALS ADMITTED THAT THIS WAS NOT A  
USUAL PRACTICE, AND NOTED THAT THERE WAS NO BUDGET FOR SUCH  
ACTIVITIES.

18. (U) THE LOCAL AND PROVINCIAL ELECTION COMMITTEES, SET UP USING BUDGETS PROVIDED BY THE NA, HAVE THE RESPONSIBILITIES TO "PROPAGANDIZE" ABOUT ELECTION PROCEDURES AND ABOUT THE "RIGHT AND DUTY" OF ALL VOTERS TO VOTE, AS WELL AS TO PREPARE THE ELECTORAL ROLLS AND THE SPECIAL VOTER IDS THAT ALL VOTERS MUST TAKE TO THE VOTING STATION ON MAY 19. VOTERS MUST HAVE BEEN BORN ON OR BEFORE MAY 18, 1984. EACH CONSTITUENCY IS DIVIDED INTO VOTING UNITS OF BETWEEN 300-1000 VOTERS, SOMETIMES REPRESENTING A SINGLE VILLAGE OR NEIGHBORHOOD. OFFICIALS STRESSED THAT, IN THIS WAY, EACH POTENTIAL VOTER WAS IN FACT PERSONALLY KNOWN TO OFFICIALS, OBVIATING THE POSSIBILITY OF VOTER FRAUD.

19. (U) ELECTION LAW PROHIBITS CERTAIN CATEGORIES OF PEOPLE FROM VOTING, MOST NOTABLY THE MENTALLY CHALLENGED. ABOUT 3,000 OF NAM DINH'S 1.16 MILLION VOTERS ARE BARRED ON THESE GROUNDS; IN PRINCIPLE, LOCAL HEALTH WORKERS MUST PROVIDE A NEGATIVE CERTIFICATE TO THE LOCAL ELECTION COMMITTEE. (667 OF NAM DINH'S CONSTITUENCY #2'S 230,000 VOTERS ARE INELIGIBLE ON THESE GROUNDS.) IN THAI BINH, THERE ARE MORE THAN 4,500 PEOPLE INELIGIBLE AMONG THE 1.2 MILLION VOTERS, PRIMARILY ON THIS GROUND. (791 OUT OF 244,000 VOTERS IN THAI BINH'S CONSTITUENCY #3 WERE MENTALLY CHALLENGED AND NOT UNCLASSIFIED

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ON THE VOTER ROLLS.)

110. (U) IN ADDITION, OFFICIALS CONFIRMED THAT ANYONE UNDER DETENTION -- EVEN BEFORE TRIAL OR SENTENCE -- AUTOMATICALLY LOSES HIS RIGHT TO VOTE. ALL PRISONERS IN PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL PRISONS ARE EQUALLY BARRED FROM VOTING, AS ARE CERTAIN OTHER INDIVIDUALS WHO MAY HAVE LOST THEIR "POLITICAL RIGHTS" AS A RESULT OF AN EARLIER SENTENCE OR TRIAL. PUBLIC SECURITY OFFICIALS ARE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE A LIST OF THESE INDIVIDUALS TO LOCAL ELECTION OFFICIALS. NAM DINH PROVINCIAL OFFICIALS DID NOT PROVIDE OVERALL STATISTICS ON THESE POPULATIONS, BUT IN ITS CONSTITUENCY #2, THERE ARE 24 PEOPLE UNDER TEMPORARY DETENTION AND 68 PRISONERS WHO WILL NOT BE VOTING THIS YEAR. IN THAI BINH'S CONSTITUENCY #3, 361 PEOPLE ARE SIMILARLY BARRED ON THESE GROUNDS, INCLUDING BOTH THOSE IN TEMPORARY DETENTION AND IN PRISON.

111. (U) IN CONTRAST, SOLDIERS STATIONED IN THESE PROVINCES VOTE LOCALLY RATHER THAN IN THEIR HOME DISTRICTS, ACCORDING TO OFFICIALS. THIS IS IN LINE WITH STANDARD PRACTICE (DESCRIBED IN REF B) OF VOTERS CASTING BALLOTS IN THE CONSTITUENCY WHERE THEY ARE PHYSICALLY PRESENT ON MAY 19, USUALLY USING A "LETTER OF INTRODUCTION" ISSUED BY THEIR HOME DISTRICT OFFICIALS, RATHER THAN BEING ABLE TO VOTE AT HOME VIA ABSENTEE BALLOT.

112. (U) ILLITERATES -- WHO ARE NOT NUMEROUS GIVEN GENERALLY WIDESPREAD EDUCATION AT LEAST A PRIMARY AND JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL LEVELS, OFFICIALS SAID -- MAY VOTE, WITH ASSISTANCE.

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VOTER TURN-OUT EXPECTED TO BE NEAR-UNIVERSAL  
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113. (U) OFFICIALS CONSISTENTLY PREDICTED TURN-OUT RATES OF WELL OVER 90 PCT OF ELIGIBLE VOTERS -- EXCLUDING THOSE CATEGORIES DESCRIBED ABOVE -- AT THIS YEAR'S ELECTION. THAI BINH OFFICIALS SAID THAT THEIR 1997 TURN-OUT RATE FOR THE NA ELECTION HAD BEEN 97.8 PCT; THIS YEAR MIGHT BE HIGHER, THEY OPINED, SINCE THE MAY DATE WAS MORE CONVENIENT THAN THE PREVIOUS ELECTION DURING THE RAINY SEASON. OFFICIALS AT LOCAL POLLING STATIONS DESCRIBED HOW THEY WOULD LITERALLY GO DOOR-TO-DOOR IF NECESSARY TO "CONVINCE" -- NOT "FORCE" -- VOTERS TO TURN UP. IF NEED BE, I.E., FOR THE SICK AND ELDERLY, THEY WILL TAKE A VOTING BOX TO THE HOME OR HOSPITAL.

114. (U) MANY LOCAL VOTERS WITH WHOM POL/C SPOKE PRIVATELY INDICATED THAT THEY DEFINITELY PLANNED ON VOTING, IF FOR NO OTHER REASON THAN THEY DID NOT WANT ANY "TROUBLE" WITH LOCAL AUTHORITIES, WHO WERE INTENT ON A HIGH TURN-OUT. WHILE SUCH A PRACTICE IS PROHIBITED BY LAW, SOME INDICATED THAT THEY WOULD ASK A PARENT OR NEIGHBOR TO CAST BALLOTS ON THEIR BEHALF; OFFICIALS ROUTINELY TURN A BLIND EYE TO SUCH PRACTICES, THEY CLAIMED. (NOTE: A NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OFFICIAL SEPARATELY INFORMED POLOFFS THAT SUCH "PROXY"

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INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AID-00	AMAD-00	CIAE-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00
	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	ED-01	FBIE-00	UTED-00	VC-00
	HHS-01	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	LAB-01	L-00
	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	OPIC-01
	PA-00	PER-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SP-00
	STR-00	TEST-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	IIP-00	PMB-00	DSCC-00
	PRM-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/011W	

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R 140846Z MAY 02  
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6438  
INFO AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH CITY  
AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH  
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE  
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VOTING HAD NEVER BEEN "DOCUMENTED," BUT IMPLIED THAT IT WAS A COMMON PRACTICE. END NOTE) LITERALLY NONE OF THE LOCALS WITH WHOM POL/C SPOKE RANDOMLY COULD IDENTIFY THEIR LOCAL UNCLASSIFIED

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CANDIDATES OR HAD READ THEIR PROGRAMS, ALTHOUGH ONE 60ISH FARMER WHO WAS PRESENT AT THAI BINH'S CONSTITUENCY #3 DURING OUR SITE VISIT APPEARED WELL-INFORMED.

NEW THIS YEAR  
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15. (U) ELECTION OFFICIALS VARIOUSLY STRESSED HOW THE 2001 CHANGES IN THE ELECTION LAW HAD ADDED THE REQUIREMENT THAT ALL CANDIDATES BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO A MORE "DEMOCRATIC" SOCIETY, AND HOW THIS HAD WEIGHED HEAVILY AGAINST SOME POTENTIAL CANDIDATES IN THE LENGTHY DECISION-MAKING PROCESS (REF B). SOME OFFICIALS EXPLAINED THE FACT THAT THERE WERE NOT MORE CANDIDATES TO DIFFICULTY IN MEETING THIS CRITERION (AS WELL AS THE OTHERS) AT NEIGHBORHOOD/WORK PLACE MEETINGS.

16. (U) FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, ALL CANDIDATES WERE REQUIRED TO FILL OUT A RUDIMENTARY ASSETS DECLARATION, FOCUSED PRIMARILY ON PERSONAL POSSESSION OF FAMILY HOUSES, LAND, AND VEHICLES. NAM DINH OFFICIALS SAID THAT THESE DECLARATIONS WERE PART OF THE CANDIDATES FILES HELD BY THE PROVINCIAL VFF; IF VOTERS WISHED TO EXAMINE THE DOCUMENTS, THEY WOULD HAVE TO GO TO THE PROVINCIAL VFF OFFICE. THAI BINH OFFICIALS, HOWEVER, PLEDGED THAT THESE DECLARATIONS WOULD BE POSTED AT ALL VOTING STATIONS. WHEN POLOFFS VISITED ITS CONSTITUENCY #3, THE DECLARATIONS WERE INDEED POSTED AND WE WERE ABLE TO VIEW COPIES. NONE OF THE CANDIDATES REPORTED ANY ASSETS IN ANY BANK, AND THE THREE CANDIDATES' SOLE ASSETS APPEARED TO BE PRIVATE HOUSING (APARTMENT OR HOUSE).

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COMMENT  
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17. (U) THIS YEAR'S ELECTION -- WHICH OFFICIALS ROUTINELY CHARACTERIZED AS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT AS THE FIRST MAJOR VIETNAMESE ELECTIONS NOT ONLY OF THE DECADE BUT OF THE MILLENNIUM -- WILL UNDOUBTEDLY AGAIN PRODUCE EXTREMELY HIGH TURN-OUTS AND OFFER VOTERS A CHANCE TO ELIMINATE AT LEAST ONE (TWO IN LARGER CONSTITUENCIES) CANDIDATE AMONG THEIR DELEGATES. DESPITE APPARENT VOTER APATHY, MOST VIETNAMESE FOLLOW THE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGNS WELL ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND THAT THEIR "RIGHT AND DUTY" TO VOTE MAKES IT INCUMBENT UPON THEM TO SHOW UP -- OR AT LEAST SEND SOMEONE IN THEIR PLACE - - TO CAST THEIR BALLOTS ON MAY 19.  
BURGHARDT

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